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Chamber of Physicians: New electricity meters cause more electrosmog

Possible health consequences - Criticism of preemptive obedience

The planned area-wide introduction of so-called "smart meters", can lead to health consequences, in the opinion of the Department of Environmental Medicine of the Austrian Chamber of Physicians (ÖÄK). The transmission of data would lead to a significant increase in exposure to electrosmog, according to a press release on Saturday. The ÖÄK now appeals to the responsible Ministry of Economy, to consider the health relevance of the new technology in the present draft bill, rather than implement with "preemptive obedience" a non-binding EU regulation.

On request of Minister of Economy Reinhold Mitterlehner at least 95 percent of all Austrian households shall be equipped with the new electricity meters by 2018, and the first SmartMeters shall be installed by the end of 2014. The minister expects a reduction of power consumption as a result.

The crux: The available transmission options such as radio or transmission over the power grid itself (Powerline Communication, short PLC) lead to electrosmog that is harmful to health. Additionally, with Power Line Communication the existing electrical lines and the connected devices now emit increasing electrosmog (electric fields in the Kilohertz range).

"In 2001, the WHO classified low-frequency magnetic fields, and in 2011 also high-frequency electromagnetic fields, as possibly carcinogenic to humans," said ÖÄK environmental consultant Gerd Oberfeld. For intermediate frequencies in the Kilohertz range, as they appear with the PLC connection from transformer to Smart Meter favored in Austria, we have data from the U.S., which also shows increased cancer risk. Also, an increased incidence of so-called Multisystem diseases - in which several organs or functional systems are affected at the same time - is conceivable. The consequences are fatigue, learning problems, depression, etc..

In several counties in California the installation of SmartMeters have meanwhile been put on hold for now, because the local public health authorities have expressed corresponding concerns. In other U.S. states, as well as in parts of Canada and France reservations about SmartMeters are growing. The Ministry of Economics is therefore requested to consider the expected health consequences, concluded the ÖÄK environmental consultant. (Sl)